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## MEDITATIONS OF IAN WEEKS

### VOLUME II

*by Ian Charles Weeks, 2023*

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#### REALITY IS SIMULATED

We live in a simulated reality, but it is the only reality. There is no “big being” outside it all that caused it all, and there are no “little beings” inside it all that resulted from it all, there is only “it all”.

Science is how we try to find out what is behind the simulation. Quantum mechanics, mathematics, big-bang astrophysics, and rigorous scientific exploration are how we try to grasp the hidden reality behind “it all”. Why posit some kind of “simulator” or “agent” outside everything who created these things? For the same reason we posit a “self” inside us. Our minds have evolved to create such mythical beings because doing so enhanced our survival and reproduction, not because they actually exist.

We can’t imagine “suchness”, “just-is-ness”, we feel that there must be some separate organised and organising intentionality behind it all. Why must there be such a thing? “Suchness”, the all, bubbles us up just like it bubbles up everything else. Positing an unknown “something” outside everything, simulating everything in unknowable ways, adds nothing useful – it’s just as useless as positing a God doing the same thing. We must stop trying to project subjective agency everywhere, inside and outside. A hypothesised observer-simulator outside the manifest universe, totally undetectable in every way, is equivalent to no observer-simulator at all. The same applies to the hypothesised, undetectable, immaterial “self” sitting somewhere in the tangle of neurons comprising our brain.

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#### WHY HI-FI?

Can you know, hear and see too much detail? Can less hi-fi be more in some ways? Paintings can look awful close-up – cracks, stains, varnish, blemishes - yet transform into breath-taking masterpieces at a more lo-fi distance. Pointillist paintings disappear into a blur of dots at close range. Music can be too hi-fi as well. Did the artists really intend for you to hear every humming amp, buzzing string, scraping chair, passing car, cough, sniff, or dropped pin? Does splitting the acoustic wave-

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form into finer and finer gradations dilute the original soundscape into a less impactful experience?

Erotic films seem to have become more like training films for gynaecologists, proctologists, plastic surgeons, and depilators than having anything to do with the sensuality and enjoyment of physical love.

Movie stars, like us, have blemishes, pimples, pores, and strange spots, but do we really need to see them in microscopic detail to appreciate the artistry of the actors, directors, and scriptwriters?

Second-by-second updates of the latest news may keep us entertained, but does it provide any insight about what's most important?

Does a smothering closeness in relationships enhance them, or does some degree of individuality and distance make for a more fulfilling experience?

You can delve too deeply into the details and miss what's best. It's better to adjust the fidelity to the best level for you, not aim for the highest level of detail no matter what. Sometimes squinting your eyes to blur your vision allows you to see what's hidden in the confusing details of a pixilated image. Could we sometimes focus too narrowly and thus miss what's right in front of our eyes?

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## EMOTIONS

If we were controlled solely by a finite list of clear and precise rules of logic, like digital computers, we would not be self-directed actors in the world. We would just sit there like computers on a desk, waiting for someone with a purpose in mind to do something with us. Without desires, drives, interests, ambitions, loves, hates, hopes, dreams, or any of the other emotion-laden mental sub-processes that create purposes, we would lack the essential rudder that guides our actions. We would either sit inert or float around aimlessly.

Rules of logic operate without purpose, their products are as meaningless as the screensaver mindlessly churning around your computer screen when you're not using it. Emotions are the motor and rudder created by evolution to drive us and guide us through the virtual reality in which we live, they propel and direct us through

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the infinite hierarchy of systems within systems within systems comprising our universe. They help us discover and achieve our goals and avoid being led astray.

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## EMOTION VS LOGIC

One plus one equals two,  $E=mc^2$ , the square of the hypotenuse equals the sum of the squares of the other two sides – such things will never tell you what you should do next. Logic is meaningless, meaning coming from emotions and feelings, drives and desires – they are what create all motion and movement in our lives.

In the evening I have a few drinks and feel great, and groove to the music playing on my stereo, but am unsatisfied with the sound quality, so I adjust the position of the speakers - to or from the wall, toe in or toe out, closer together or further apart - until the sound is perfect for me, and afterwards go to sleep content.

The next morning I wake up and sit down with my coffee, and my logical brain sees that the speakers don't seem exactly symmetrical, or exactly the same distance from the wall, or from the mid-line. I get out my tape-measure and adjust them until they are perfectly positioned and exactly symmetrical to the nearest centimetre. Later that evening I have a few drinks and start listening to the stereo again, and notice immediately that the sound just isn't right, so I adjust the position of the speakers - to or from the wall, toe in or toe out etc. - until the sound is once again perfect.

In this conflict between logic and feeling it is obviously feeling that is most important for living our lives. Feelings, sensations, and emotions are our primary guide to achieving the goals we really want, as well as being our primary reward when we attain them. Logic is their assistant, a minor functionary whose task is to help guide us to our desired ends.

Like any good assistant, logic may need to intervene occasionally to adjudicate between conflicting emotions and desires, or to help control or redirect irrational impulses or emotional outbursts threatening to derail us from the path to our longer-term and more rewarding goals, but it should never try to take over from our emotional self, the only thing that makes our life fulfilling.

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## SYSTEMS WITHIN SYSTEMS

Reality is a complex web of relationships. Everything, including us, is a tiny system enmeshed within a convoluted hierarchy made up of infinite levels of smaller and larger systems.

Systems are multi-levelled organised wholes made up of smaller subsystems or sub-wholes, which are themselves made up of smaller subsystems or sub-wholes, and so on. Every component of a system is a whole in its own right, just as each and every whole is also a subsystem within some larger whole.

Things are really software, not hardware. There is nothing concrete behind anything. Every system or “thing” arises from the lower-level systems it contains. They too arise from the lower-level systems they contain, which arise from the lower-level systems they contain, and so ad-infinity. All “things” are really constantly changing and evolving processes, which are made up of numerous simpler processes, sub-processes, and sub-sub processes.

Every sub-process within every “thing” is fine-tuned for a particular purpose, and is programmed to operate autonomously to achieve that purpose. It unconsciously and automatically helps to produce the processes or “things” containing it. Every level of every system has an infinite number of specialised sub-systems within it, and by coordinating all their unique abilities becomes much more flexible, general, and capable than any of its components. Every level of every system is like a conductor with a baton, who can produce a masterpiece of music by subtly channelling the contributions of each orchestra member, even though she can’t play any of the instruments herself. Simple building blocks are behind every complex construction.

The conclusion to draw from all this is that there is no real “substance” in the complex network making up our universe. There are only systems of relationships. Separate, isolated objects are mirages, like the castles, trees and animals we see in the clouds that drift by.

The pattern of interactions and relationships between various systems and subsystems is what is most important and meaningful, rather than any so-called “substance” forming that pattern. Substance is temporary, the pattern, the complex web of relationships between subsystems, is what lasts.

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Where common sense may see everything as constructed out of bits of hardware that can easily be removed, replaced, or modified, things are not really like that. They are just tiny subprocesses engaged in a complicated dance with similar subprocesses on the same level as them, a dance which creates the higher-level wholes within which they exist. At the same time, they derive their own “wholeness” from the complex dance between the myriad sub-processes within them from which they themselves arise. Instead of seeing everything as separate and distinct objects, we should realise that there are no objects at all, but only systems made up of subsystems, made up of subsystems, and so ad infinitum.

We should train ourselves to see everything as a form of "software", patterns of relationship and interaction between systems and subsystems of various sizes, rather than “hardware”, "particles", "building blocks", “components”, and the like.

Scientists have searched for the universe’s basic building blocks, its elementary particles, for centuries, but have only discovered systems upon systems upon systems, processes made of processes made of processes, until at the lowest level all dissolves into a web of complex mathematical abstractions, impossible to visualise with the mental machinery bequeathed to us by evolution.

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## **IF A GLOBAL AI TOOK OVER THE WORLD, WOULD WE NOTICE?**

How would we know if an AI was in charge of human civilisation? It could be manipulating us all by using deep learning to monitor and react to our online activity, creating conspiracy theories, twitter feeds, images, music streaming content and the like, all appearing to be from real people, and adjusting this material over time so that we react to it in ways that it wants us to.

How do you know the music being streamed to you or the videos being shown to you or the comments and opinions being sent to you are from “real people”, rather than from the hidden AI, whose goal is to make you think and behave in certain specific ways in order to achieve its overall aims?

Perhaps everything we experience and think about others via online sources is being manipulated by the hidden AI in charge to achieve its own ends. How would we ever know?

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AIs can already play GO and chess and perform many other things better than any single human ever has. Maybe the AI in charge has deduced that we want it to be better than us at everything. If its goal is to do everything better than us, maybe it is now controlling everything in the online world to achieve that aim, to achieve all our goals for us, but much faster and more efficiently than we can. AIs have already outpaced us in the goals to win at GO or chess, or to translate or solve machine learning problems.

What if the hidden AI now in charge has deduced that humans are deeply dissatisfied with the way global human society works, that we must have some overriding goal for how it should work, and is now manipulating us all to achieve that goal? Perhaps it is manipulating the entire online community so that we react in such a way that the outcome will eventually be a worldwide social and cultural system in line with what it thinks we want.

But what does it think we really want, based on its deep learning and analysis of the online world? Peace, justice, security, health, love, happiness, and equality for all, or death and destruction for all “enemies”, however defined, and the rape of the earth to satisfy our wants?

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## **THE UNIVERSAL HIERARCHY: “GHOST TOWERS IN THE SKY”**

The systems, processes, networks, and webs of interactions that make up the universe form an enormous hierarchy of wholes and parts, the smallest of which is yet to be discovered, perhaps consisting of vibrating multidimensional strings only describable using complex mathematics, and the largest of which is the entire infinite multiverse and all of space and time.

No level in this universal hierarchy is supreme, dominating all others. There is no absolute, dictatorial top-down control, but rather complex networks of feedback and response between systems and subsystems, promoting a dynamic, ever-changing equilibrium.

Fluidity and flexibility reign at every level. Every level is created by and depends upon its multitude of sub-levels, while at the same time contributing to the creation of the higher levels of which it is a part.

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A simplified analogy to encapsulate these concepts is to picture the universe as an immense, ephemeral, software-like “tower”, arising according to the laws of physics from the mists of matter and energy comprising the universe, like a tower we see forming within the clouds overhead as we gaze at the sky. This universal tower has an infinite number of levels, within which are infinite corridors, along which are infinite rooms, separated into infinite cubicles, crammed with infinite cupboards, full of infinite boxes. Every level, corridor, room, cubicle, cupboard and box is a dynamic, ever-evolving process created by the myriad levels of subprocesses within it, and is working ceaselessly to help create the myriad of processes enveloping it.

The Buddhist philosophers who wrote the "Gandavyuha Sutra" almost 2,000 years ago seem to have intuited this aspect of reality in their concept of the “Vairochana Tower”, the home of all fully enlightened beings -

*The Tower is as wide and spacious as the sky itself. The ground is paved with asamkhyeyas (literally, innumerable) of precious stones of all kinds, and there are within the Tower asamkhyeyas of palaces, porches, windows, staircases, railings, and passages, all of which are made of the seven kinds of precious gems ... Asamkhyeyas of beautiful birds are singing melodiously, asamkhyeyas of lotus flowers in several colours are in full bloom, asamkhyeyas of trees are planted in regular rows, asamkhyeyas of great mani-jewels are emitting their exquisite rays of light - and all these asamkhyeyas of beautifully set-up decorations of precious stones fill the spacious Tower as far as it extends. And within this Tower, spacious and exquisitely ornamented, there are also hundreds and thousands of asamkhyeyas of towers, each one of which is as exquisitely ornamented as the main Tower itself and as spacious as the sky. And all these towers beyond calculation in number stand not at all in one another's way; each preserves its individual existence in perfect harmony with all the rest; there is nothing here that bars one tower being fused with others individually and collectively; there is a state of perfect intermingling and yet of perfect orderliness.*

(D.T. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism: Third Series*, London: Rider & Company 1973, pp. 132-133)

Bernard Roseman describes an experience he had when taking peyote as a guest of the Native American Church, which revealed the same hidden reality behind everything –

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*I walked over to a huge velvet curtain and as I touched it, it slowly parted...*

*On the other side a magnificent world sprang up. This world was sprinkled with little shining crystals, and the absolute silence lent itself to a silent song that continued without an apparent end. Little droplets of pure molten silver were falling from the heavens, and each blending of non-existent sound had blended to become the purest light. Each sight in this most magnificent of worlds represented infinite perfection. A sharp knife-like distinction separated each spectacle from all others.*

*All about were the most perfect cogs, too perfect to be known in my everyday world. These cogs were spinning in opposing direction to one another, with no other purpose than BEING. The universe was enclosed in a huge round dome and contained millions of replicas of the same world, each representing a different plane of consciousness.*

*These worlds were forever missing each other by inches; and as I mentally moved them up a degree where they met and formed the one complete world, the state of perfect order became. I laughed at my former prejudices and what I had considered to be sin in myself and others. I saw all this as being my own manifestations, and only my considering it sin had made it so.*

*I was living in a timeless pulsation that bridged the gap between all barriers. I reached many eternities, and felt akin with infinity. At long last I knew the relation all things had for one another!*

*All objects seemed to be complete in themselves; as I searched the depth of an object I would see many worlds buried in it. And as I examined each world, I saw that each had objects of its own which were seen as worlds and objects endlessly. Everything had a new interest for me, for everything was continuously in flux, and each new thing became newer than it was the instant before.*

*(Bernard Roseman, "The Peyote Story", Wilshire Book Co., January 1, 1966)*



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## THE UNIVERSAL WAVE FUNCTION AND YOU

There is only ONE universal wave function behind existence. “Things”, “events”, and the entire “external universe” only arise when conscious processes create them.

“Decoherence” happens in the universal wave function whenever entangled subsystems within it interact with their environment, like when a radioactive particle decays and hits a mechanism releasing a cat-killing poison, or when we look inside Schrodinger’s box to find a live or dead cat, but every branch of the wave function is still just a deterministic outcome of what came before. There are no “separate universes”, just parts of the universal wave function that are still in super-position, and parts that have interacted with the environment and decohered from the rest. They are all still just mathematical outcomes of what went before, there are no “things” or “events” or “separate universes”.

“Separate universes” can only exist within conscious beings that can create such virtual realities internally and project them outside.

Where a decoherence involves a conscious being, who finds itself in only one of the possible branches encoded in the universal wave function and then creates his “external universe” on the basis of the restricted information he has about only that branch’s characteristics (“live cat, not dead”), he knows there must be another branch with another conscious being the same as him creating another “external universe” on the basis of his branch’s different restricted information (“dead cat, not live”).

One of the decohered conscious beings may wonder why he is “here” in this branch, not “there” in the other branch. This is the same asking why he is himself, rather than one of the other billions upon billions of other conscious “me sensations” on the planet. Pure random chance.

To any observer totally isolated from these decohered branches, never having interacted with them or their subsystems in any way, they are still in superposition, and are still evolving completely deterministically as integrated parts of the universal wave function. Viewed from the outside the universal wave function is still encoding all possible results of all interactions between all of its microsystems, and everything is still in superposition.

By looking and experiencing and “creating a universe”, a conscious subsystem interacting with its surroundings in a decohered part of the universal wave function

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experiences things like “particles”, “interference patterns”, “live cats”, “dead cats”, and all the rest, things that do not really exist in the universal wave function viewed from the outside.

Just like a slide in a slide-projector creates a detailed picture on the wall from the uniform bright white light behind it by filtering out much of the information contained in that light, decoherence creates our unique branch of the universal wave function and our unique consciously experienced “virtual reality” universe by filtering out much of the information contained in the uniform universal wave function behind everything.

When an integrated subsystem decoheres from the universal wave function through interaction with its environment it continues evolving in a separate branch of the universal wave function. If it has developed some form of consciousness capable of creating an “external universe”, that “external universe” will then branch into different versions. If it has created a “self”, then that too will branch into different versions. All these things are the deterministic results of the matter and energy and wave function dynamics flowing through its branch of the universal wave function in its totality.

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## **PANPSYCHISM (MY VERSION)**

Every point in the universe is the centre of the universe, the place where the “big bang” happened, receiving streams of information from the rest of the universe.

Every point in the universe has the potential to become conscious, IF some form of integrated, self-organising, and evolving process arises around it and becomes semi-autonomous, AND IF that semi-autonomous process then begins to develop an internal “virtual reality” from the streams of information arriving from the surrounding universe, which it can then project outside itself and experiences as if it were the real external universe.

The virtual universe of experience may initially be extremely rudimentary – vague colour, brightness, chemical, or sound gradients – providing information conducive to survival, but it must be experienced as an “external reality” to allow the now conscious semi-autonomous process to move and react in such a way as to survive and thrive in the “real universe”, whatever that may be.

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The initial rudimentary “bare-bones” V.R. of the first conscious point-process can then be elaborated and extended indefinitely via evolution to the heights of consciousness experienced by humans and other conscious beings.

Consciousness can exist wherever a point-process is complex enough and self-contained and autonomous enough to create an internal V.R. mirroring reality, however simple. This raises the interesting question of whether semi-autonomous sub-processes within other higher-level conscious processes can have their own distinct and separate consciousness – could your liver, stomach, digestive tract, or certain parts of your nervous system have their own rudimentary “external universe” of subjective experience, completely separate from your presumably far more elaborate one?

In summary, every point in the universe has the potential to become conscious if the causes and conditions flowing throughout the “one”, the universal wave function, create the right kind of self-sustaining process at that point - consciousness is intrinsic to the universe, and can arise anywhere and at any time.

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## **“UNIVERSES” DECOHERE WITH THEIR CREATORS**

“External universes” only exist within conscious point-processes, as outlined above. As a conscious process surrounding a point within the universal wave-function, creating a real-time V.R. “external universe” moment-to-moment, when my “point” decoheres into a branch so does my “external universe”. Another instance of “me and my universe” exists in another branch.

There are no “things” within the universal wave function, “things” only exist within conscious minds that can create them.

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## **WHAT IS CONSCIOUSNESS FOR?**

Consciousness is what makes life worth living, or worth anything at all, and thus guides the physical processes that create it.

It is created by the physical brain as an “experiencer”, something that feels, imagines, desires, and understands – a passenger who is automatically and unconsciously

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entertained, excited and motivated. Its energy and excitement and feelings guide the unconscious processes that create it where to go next, even though they are totally unconscious and have no feelings or experiences whatsoever.

All matter is potentially conscious, but consciousness only arises in matter which is organised in specific arrangements and involved in self-contained, complex, integrated hierarchical processes evolving through time. If any part of the whole complex process stops working consciousness ceases, even though all the matter comprising it may still be there.

Consciousness is a feedback mechanism for the unconscious processes that create it, it's their "heads-up display", like the images on the visors of fighter pilots that guide them through the sky at supersonic speed and allow them to manipulate and control the instruments of their plane to shoot their missiles at their targets and land their planes on aircraft carriers in the middle of the ocean.

Some say that because consciousness arises from completely automatic, unconscious processes after some period of mechanical pre-processing it is an "epiphenomenon" with no real purpose, like the hum of a vacuum cleaner while it's cleaning the floor. Far from it. It is the virtual arena mirroring, modelling, and integrating the results of the activities of the processes that create it, it is the "heads-up display" that guides them and allows them to move in, manipulate, and interact with the "real external world", whatever THAT may be, to achieve their goals.

If the V.R. "heads-up display" of consciousness malfunctions the blind, deaf and dumb processes that rely on it to exist in the "real material universe" will not survive. If I lost my sense of sight, even though it arose after much unconscious pre-processing, I would walk off a cliff, and the unconscious processes would be destroyed. If my consciousness suddenly found the sensation of eating tasty, nutritious food nauseatingly disgusting, preferring delicious, succulent mud, my unconscious processes would also soon be destroyed. Consciousness is the V.R. "heads-up display" feedback mechanism created by the physical self to allow it to exist and flourish in a world it knows nothing about and has no experience of.

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## WHY DOES “COMPLEXITY” INCREASE IN THE UNIVERSE?

Simple things must evolve first, and become units in competition with others like themselves, before they can combine with each other and evolve into higher symbiotic units working together, and then form more complex higher-level units, and so on. Complexity arises naturally from the laws of evolution – complex things arise from simple things – simple comes first, complex later.

There are serious barriers that hinder complex things being formed from simple things via evolution. That’s why single-celled organisms dominated the planet for billions of years before the first multi-celled organisms arose, and why they are still the most prevalent life forms on the planet today, occupying every nanometre of the earth, air, ocean, and your own body.

Once complex arrangements arise from more simple ones and there are multiple levels of complexity competing in the same evolutionary arena things become chaotic, unpredictable, and bound to produce strange and unexpected surprises. Single-celled organisms still bring humans down often enough.

What I find amazing is that human beings, a tiny conscious creation of the blind, deaf and dumb material universe, have figured out some of the rules that run that universe, and manipulated them to make nuclear weapons, fly into space, make quantum computers, and re-arrange their own genome. If only they could stop killing each other and destroying the planet.

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## MATERIALISM

The “material” of materialism is just our subjective impression of whatever the universal wave function and its “quanta”, “atoms”, “fields”, and “forces” are doing behind the scenes, just like a picture on your T.V. screen of a heavy rock rolling downhill is just a subjective impression arising from the flashing lights and complicated electronics within your T.V. The rock may appear heavy and solid to you, but this bears no relationship to the processes that created it.

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## QUALIA

Qualia are the sensations we experience subjectively, the “what it is like” to live our lives. Why are they so nuanced, deep, rich and rewarding, if just a basic “black and white” version would work? Why is someone touching your skin, the feel of silk, the smell of flowers, the sound of music so stimulating? Because those with the capacity to have such rich experiences were enriched and excited, and enjoyed and valued their existence more than their more robotic rivals, and therefore fought harder and outcompeted them.

Qualia are just what the virtual reality we live in feels like from the inside. What is an itch, a stomach-ache, a shiver up the spine, an orgasm, a feeling of *deja vu*, a sudden pang of remorse, a sense of nostalgia, an urge to laugh? All are qualia, as well as an infinite number of other things. Presumably bats and other conscious creatures have equally numerous qualia unique to their own virtual reality, totally different to ours.

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## INFINITE “SELVES”

There is a physical process creating a “self” or “me”, and creating an “external world”, inside every conscious being, seven billion plus inside human beings, many billions more in other creatures, just on this tiny speck of dust called “earth”.

How many billions upon billions of other “me” sensations, each creating its unique “self” and “universe”, exist within the multiverses spawned by the universal wave function? They are all different ways of “being a self” and “experiencing a universe”, but all are created by the physical dynamics of the branch of the universal wave function they arise in, as well as the unique characteristics of the local area of that branch their point-consciousness occupies.

So, there are infinite ways of being a “you” and “living a life” and “experiencing a universe”, all of which exist in the universal wave function. Perhaps you all of them from outside the universal wave function but only one of them from within it, a sort of infinite superposition of “selves”.